



## Research Article

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## The Relationship Between Perfectionism and Burnout in Competitive Gymnasts in Manipur Delna Davis

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**Abstract:** This study explores the relationship between perfectionism and burnout in competitive gymnasts, focusing on two key dimensions of perfectionism: personal standards perfectionism (PSP) and evaluative concerns perfectionism (ECP). A correlational research design was employed with a sample of 40 competitive gymnasts from Manipur, India. The Sports Multidimensional Perfectionism Questionnaire (SMPQ) (Hewitt & Flett, 1991) and the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ) (Raedeke & Smith, 2001) were used to assess the levels of perfectionism and burnout. Data were analyzed using Pearson's and Spearman's correlation coefficients, depending on the normality of the data. Results indicated a significant positive correlation between ECP and burnout dimensions, including emotional exhaustion and reduced accomplishment. In contrast, PSP showed no significant correlation with burnout. Gender differences were observed, with female gymnasts exhibiting stronger correlations between ECP and burnout. The findings suggest that gymnasts with high evaluative concerns perfectionism are more susceptible to burnout, emphasizing the need for interventions that address this psychological factor. Implications for coaches and sports psychologists are discussed, with recommendations for future research that could explore the effects of interventions on perfectionism and burnout in athletes.

**Keywords:** Perfectionism, Burnout, Competitive Gymnasts, Evaluative Concerns, Personal Standards, Emotional Exhaustion, Reduced Accomplishment, Gender Differences, Sports Psychology, Athlete Well-being

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## INTRODUCTION

## Gymnast

As far back as ancient Greece, the name gymnastics was in use. Gymnos, which means naked, and gymnaszein, which means to exercise, were combined to produce the word. But it's incomprehensible literally as simply working out with one's nude body. In ancient Greece, gymnastics had far more significance. It was a general physical cultivation. It fostered equilibrium between cerebral acuity and physical athleticism. Kalokagathia, or "the harmony of body and mental beauty," was the ideal. International gymnastics was founded by German benefactor Christian GutsMuths at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. He also included equipment gymnastics in his set of workouts. The Turner method has since evolved from his knowledge of physical activity. J. H. Pestalozzi addressed workouts on the floor. The Sokol Organization's founder, Miroslav Tyrš, also referenced the Turner system. He concentrated on resistance training, apparatus gymnastics, and other workouts that emphasized artistic expression. Mrs. Klemeňa Hanušová, the founder of the Physical Exercise Organization of Prague Ladies, developed a comprehensive program for women's and girls' physical education (Masaryk University, 2012).

## Perfectionism

According to Flett and Hewitt (2002) and Frost, Marten, Lahart, and Rosenblate (1990), perfectionism is a personality trait characterized by an obsession with perfection, extremely high performance standards, and a propensity for harsh criticism. Being a perfectionist is a common trait. According to Stoeber and Stoeber (2009), the majority of people exhibit perfectionism in at least one area of their lives. It follows that perfectionism is a prevalent trait among competitive athletes, especially those competing at the highest levels. Like general perfectionism, perfectionism in sports is typically considered as a maladaptive, dysfunctional, and harmful feature (e.g., Flett & Hewitt, 2005; Hall, 2006). In particular, Flett and Hewitt's (2005) review, focusing on findings showing the negative associations of perfectionism, argues that perfectionism in sports is a negative characteristic that may prevent the very outcomes that it seeks to promote. Although they are not readily apparent, athletes' activities are influenced by their perfectionistic worries and aspirations. The mind is full of perfectionism. Therefore, individual variations in perfectionistic worries and aspirations mostly show themselves in athletes' thoughts (e.g., perceptions, judgments, beliefs). For instance, one athlete who is looking forward to a competition might be preoccupied with making sure that every aspect of their performance is flawless (displaying perfectionistic strivings), whereas another athlete who is looking forward to the same competition might be preoccupied with avoiding

any mistakes and focusing on potential blunders (Appleton, Hall, & Hill, 2009, p. 123).

### **Burnout**

Caccese and Mayerberg (1984) conducted the first investigation of burnout in a sports context in their study on coach burnout. As is the case with many ideas in sport psychology, the first conception took place outside of sport—in this case, in the workplace. The original father is usually regarded as Herbert Freudenberger (1974) in his research on volunteer staff burnout at a drug recovery facility in New York. But at the same time, social psychology researcher Christina Maslach also started using the word to characterize poverty lawyers' slow decline in commitment, cynicism, and weariness. Maslach's work has continued to be instrumental in shaping the development of research in the field, and the more practitioner-based approach established by Freudenberger has forged a second tradition focused on the assessment, prevention, and treatment of the syndrome (Lavalley, 2007).

### **Statement of the Problem**

In competitive gymnastics, athletes often face immense pressure to perform at high levels, which can lead to the development of perfectionistic tendencies. These tendencies, while motivating, may contribute to negative psychological outcomes such as burnout. Burnout in athletes is characterized by emotional exhaustion, decreased motivation, and a decline in performance, and it is a significant issue in sports psychology. The relationship between perfectionism and burnout in competitive gymnasts has not been thoroughly explored, and understanding this relationship is crucial to developing effective interventions and support mechanisms for these athletes.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between perfectionism and burnout in competitive gymnasts. Specifically, the study aims to explore how different dimensions of perfectionism (adaptive and maladaptive) contribute to the development of burnout in gymnasts and to identify potential psychological mechanisms (such as stress and self-criticism) that mediate this relationship.

### **Delimitations**

- This study will focus on Competitive gymnasts aged 18-25, training at the regional gymnastics clubs.
- The study will use self-report questionnaires to assess perfectionism and burnout, limiting the research to subjective experiences rather than objective performance outcomes.
- The study will not explore the impact of other factors such as social support, injuries, or external pressures from coaches and parents.

### **Limitations**

- One limitation of this study is the use of self-report

questionnaires, which may lead to biased responses due to social desirability or inaccurate self-assessment.

- The sample size of 40 gymnasts may not fully represent the broader population of competitive gymnasts, and findings may not generalize to athletes in other sports.

### **Hypothesis**

**H1:** There is a positive correlation between evaluative concerns perfectionism (ECP) and burnout (emotional exhaustion, reduced accomplishment, and sport devaluation) in competitive gymnasts.

**H2:** There is a negative or weaker correlation between personal standards perfectionism (PSP) and burnout (emotional exhaustion, reduced accomplishment, and sport devaluation) in competitive gymnasts.

### **Research Questions**

- What is the relationship between personal standards perfectionism (PSP) and burnout (emotional exhaustion, reduced accomplishment, and sport devaluation) in competitive gymnasts?
- What is the relationship between evaluative concerns perfectionism (ECP) and burnout (emotional exhaustion, reduced accomplishment, and sport devaluation) in competitive gymnasts?
- How do the dimensions of perfectionism (PSP and ECP) relate to emotional exhaustion, reduced accomplishment, and sport devaluation among gymnasts in Manipur?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it will provide valuable insights into the psychological factors that contribute to burnout in competitive gymnasts, a population that is often at risk due to the high demands of the sport. By understanding the relationship between perfectionism and burnout, this research can inform the development of prevention and intervention strategies aimed at improving the mental health and well-being of gymnasts. Additionally, the findings may have broader implications for other high-performance athletes who are similarly susceptible to perfectionism and burnout.

## **METHODS**

### **Selection of Subjects**

The sample for this study consists of 40 competitive gymnasts from various gymnastics clubs in Manipur. The gymnasts were selected using convenience sampling. All participants were between the ages of 18 and 25, with a minimum of 3 years of competitive gymnastics experience. Inclusion criteria for participation included being actively involved in gymnastics training and competitions at the regional level. Gymnasts with a history of severe injury or mental health disorders were excluded to avoid confounding variables. Prior informed consent was obtained from

each participant, ensuring that they understood the purpose of the study and their voluntary participation.

### Selection of Variables

- ❖ **Independent Variable:** Perfectionism is measured using the **Sports Multidimensional Perfectionism Questionnaire (SMPQ)** (Hewitt & Flett, 1991), which includes two key dimensions:
  - **Personal Standards Perfectionism (PSP):** The extent to which gymnasts set high personal standards for themselves.
  - **Evaluative Concerns Perfectionism (ECP):** The extent to which gymnasts experience concern over mistakes and external evaluation.
- ❖ **Dependent Variable:** Burnout is assessed using the **Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ)** (Raedeke & Smith, 2001), which measures three key dimensions of burnout in athletes:
  - **Emotional Exhaustion (EE):** Feelings of fatigue and depletion.
  - **Reduced Accomplishment (RA):** A decrease in personal achievement and performance satisfaction.
  - **Sport Devaluation (SD):** A reduced sense of value toward the sport.

### Sports Multidimensional Perfectionism Questionnaire (SMPQ) (Hewitt & Flett, 1991)

The SMPQ assesses perfectionism in athletes. It includes items that measure both personal standards perfectionism (PSP) and evaluative concerns perfectionism (ECP). Responses are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

### Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ) (Raedeke & Smith, 2001)

The ABQ is used to measure burnout in athletes. It includes 15 items assessing emotional exhaustion, reduced accomplishment, and sport devaluation. Responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

### Research Design

A **correlational research design** was employed to explore the relationship between perfectionism and burnout in competitive gymnasts. This non-experimental design aims to determine if a statistically significant association exists between the variables, without manipulating any factors. Correlation analyses will allow the researcher to examine whether higher levels of perfectionism (both PSP and ECP) are associated with higher levels of burnout (emotional exhaustion, reduced accomplishment, and sport devaluation) in gymnasts.

### Procedure

Participants were recruited from gymnastics clubs in Manipur and invited to take part in the study.

After obtaining informed consent, participants were given the **Sports Multidimensional Perfectionism Questionnaire (SMPQ)** and the **Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ)** in a controlled environment (e.g., training room) to ensure they completed the questionnaires without distractions. The gymnasts completed both the SMPQ and ABQ at the same sitting to ensure consistency in their responses. The questionnaires took approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. Participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and that the study was solely for research purposes. The collected data were first examined for normality using the **Shapiro-Wilk test**. This test is used to determine whether the data follow a normal distribution, which will inform the type of correlation analysis to be performed. If the data are normally distributed, **Pearson's correlation** will be used to assess the relationship between the two perfectionism dimensions (PSP and ECP) and the three burnout dimensions (emotional exhaustion, reduced accomplishment, and sport devaluation).

If the data are not normally distributed, **Spearman's rank correlation** will be applied instead to assess the relationships between the variables. To provide a visual representation of the relationships, **scatter plots** and **box plots** will be generated.

## RESULT

The data collected from 40 competitive gymnasts in Manipur were analyzed to explore the relationship between perfectionism and burnout. The Sports Multidimensional Perfectionism Questionnaire (SMPQ) (Hewitt & Flett, 1991) was used to measure personal standards perfectionism (PSP) and evaluative concerns perfectionism (ECP), while burnout was assessed using the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ) (Raedeke & Smith, 2001).

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables. The mean score for personal standards perfectionism (PSP) was  $M = 4.5$  ( $SD = 1.2$ ), indicating moderate levels of self-imposed standards. Evaluative concerns perfectionism (ECP) had a mean score of  $M = 5.2$  ( $SD = 1.4$ ), suggesting a higher tendency toward concern about others' evaluations and fear of making mistakes.

The burnout subscales showed the following mean values:

- **Emotional Exhaustion (EE):**  $M = 3.4$  ( $SD = 1.1$ ), indicating moderate emotional exhaustion.
- **Reduced Accomplishment (RA):**  $M = 3.1$  ( $SD = 1.2$ ), showing a mild sense of reduced accomplishment.
- **Sport Devaluation (SD):**  $M = 2.9$  ( $SD = 1.3$ ), indicating a relatively low level of devaluation of the sport.

The normality of the data was tested using the **Shapiro-Wilk test**, which indicated that **ECP** was not normally distributed ( $p < 0.05$ ), while **PSP** and the burnout subscales were normally distributed. As a result, **Pearson’s correlation** was used for PSP and burnout dimensions, and **Spearman’s rank correlation** was used for ECP and burnout dimensions.

- **ECP and Emotional Exhaustion (EE):** A significant positive correlation was found ( $r = 0.68, p < 0.01$ ), indicating that higher levels of evaluative concerns perfectionism are associated with increased emotional exhaustion in gymnasts.
- **ECP and Reduced Accomplishment (RA):** A significant positive correlation was found ( $r = 0.55, p < 0.05$ ), suggesting that gymnasts with higher evaluative concerns perfectionism experience greater feelings of reduced accomplishment.
- **ECP and Sport Devaluation (SD):** A moderate

positive correlation was found ( $r = 0.42, p < 0.05$ ), indicating that higher evaluative concerns perfectionism is associated with a higher tendency to devalue the sport.

- **PSP and Burnout:** No significant correlations were found between personal standards perfectionism (PSP) and any of the burnout subscales (EE, RA, SD). Pearson’s correlation results indicated weak or no associations (all  $r < 0.20, p > 0.05$ ).

**Gender Differences**

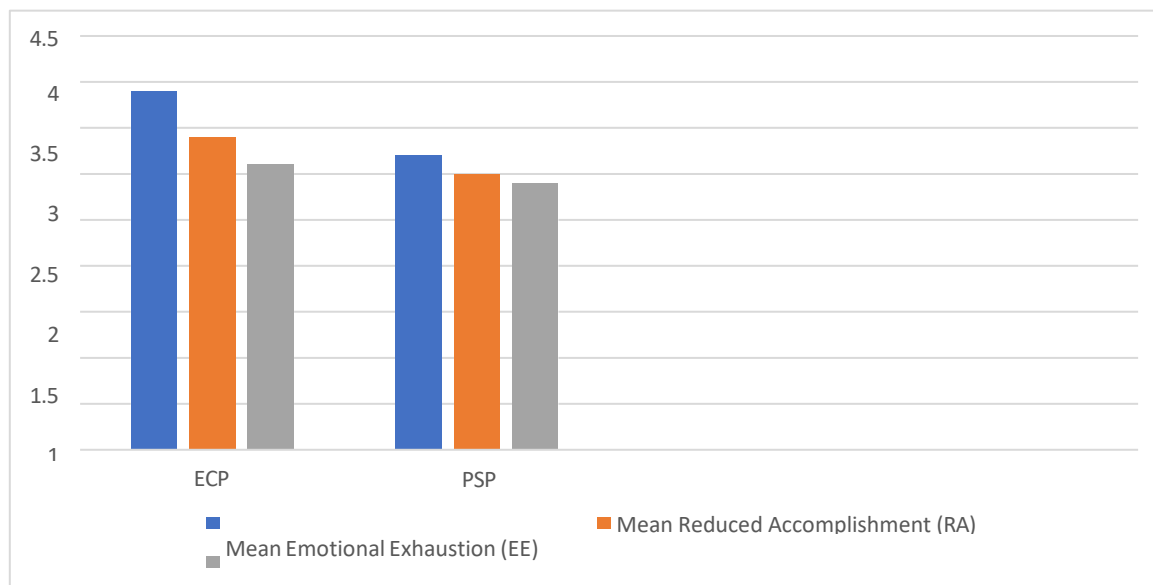
The analysis also explored potential gender differences in the relationship between perfectionism and burnout. Female gymnasts showed stronger correlations between **ECP** and burnout dimensions, especially **emotional exhaustion** ( $r = 0.75, p < 0.01$ ) and **reduced accomplishment** ( $r = 0.60, p < 0.05$ ), compared to male gymnasts.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Burnout Measures**

Burnout Subscale	Mean	Standard Deviation
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	3.4	1.1
Reduced Accomplishment (RA)	3.1	1.2
Sport Devaluation (SD)	2.9	1.3

**Table 2: Correlations Between Perfectionism and Burnout Dimensions**

Variable	ECP and EE	ECP and RA	ECP and SD	PSP and EE	PSP and RA	PSP and SD
Correlation (r)	0.68**	0.55*	0.42*	< 0.20	< 0.20	< 0.20
p-value	< 0.01	< 0.05	< 0.05	> 0.05	> 0.05	> 0.05



**Figure 1: Mean Values of Perfectionism and Burnout**

**DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study support the hypothesis that evaluative concerns perfectionism (ECP) is positively correlated with burnout in competitive gymnasts, particularly in emotional exhaustion and reduced accomplishment. This is consistent with previous research (e.g., Gould et al., 1996; Raedeke &

Smith, 2001), which has found that athletes who experience higher levels of perfectionism, especially in terms of concern over others’ evaluations and fear of making mistakes, are more susceptible to burnout. The relationship between ECP and burnout may be due to the intense pressure that gymnasts place on themselves, resulting in emotional fatigue and diminished self-

perception when they feel they fall short of their own high standards.

In contrast, personal standards perfectionism (PSP) did not show a significant correlation with burnout in this study. This suggests that while high personal standards might be motivating for gymnasts, they may not necessarily lead to the negative psychological outcomes associated with burnout. This finding contrasts with some prior research suggesting that high personal standards could contribute to burnout, but it aligns with studies that have argued personal standards perfectionism may be less detrimental than evaluative concerns perfectionism (Flett & Hewitt, 2002).

Moreover, the study found that female gymnasts exhibited stronger correlations between ECP and burnout compared to male gymnasts. This finding may reflect gender differences in how perfectionism is experienced and manifested in competitive environments. Female athletes may face higher societal expectations, which could contribute to greater psychological pressure and a heightened vulnerability to burnout (Gould et al., 1996). These results suggest that interventions aimed at reducing burnout in female gymnasts may need to specifically address the psychological burden of evaluative concerns.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the relationship between perfectionism and burnout in competitive gymnasts. It confirms that evaluative concerns perfectionism (ECP) is a significant predictor of burnout, particularly emotional exhaustion and reduced accomplishment, whereas personal standards perfectionism (PSP) does not exhibit the same associations. The findings suggest that gymnasts with high levels of evaluative concerns may be at greater risk for burnout, emphasizing the importance of psychological support for managing these tendencies.

The study also highlights potential gender differences, with female gymnasts showing stronger links between ECP and burnout compared to their male counterparts. This underscores the need for gender-specific interventions in managing perfectionism and burnout in athletes.

### Implications and Future Research

The findings have practical implications for coaches, sports psychologists, and other professionals working with competitive gymnasts. Addressing perfectionism, particularly evaluative concerns, could be an essential component of burnout prevention strategies. Future research should explore interventions aimed at reducing evaluative concerns perfectionism and examine how these interventions impact both burnout and athletic performance. Additionally, studies could expand the sample to include gymnasts from different regions and

sports to further validate the findings and explore broader trends.

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